

Mayor's column for
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It's hard to believe that 15 years have gone by since that January night in 1996 when I was appointed to the City Council. Less than four years later I was elected mayor. And here we are in 2010.

After serving as your mayor since 2000, I have many thoughts about my time in office. Some of which I won't be sharing since this is a family newspaper!

Years ago at a neighboring city's retirement party for their mayor, I was asked to say a few words. I recall saying that unless you have ever served as a mayor, you would never truly understand what it is like. Sometimes you get credit for something you had nothing to do with, but most often you get the blame for something you didn't even know about and didn't even have a hand in. It could be the best and worst job at the same time.

With 40,000 people as your boss, it is impossible to please everyone. Likewise it was often a challenge to work hand in hand with seven Councilmembers. While for the most part the 40,000 people remained the same, the Council often had a turnover that would change the dynamics for the mayor and staff. The lines between the legislative branch and executive branches of local government frequently blurred.

Because of those inherent drawbacks in our political system, a mayor is often left to wonder how he is doing in the public eye. The only real feedback comes at election time. So during those four-year gaps, doubt often creeps into one's mind. I have been fortunate in my 11 years as mayor to have had an amazing support base of residents, and I thank you for that support and encouragement—many times when I needed it the most!

I have been asked recently what my "legacy" is for my years as mayor. It's hard to pick one thing that would stand out. My goal was always to be accessible to residents. Writing in the newspapers, holding town hall and neighborhood meetings, and simply stopping on the street to chat were ways I felt I could open up City Hall to you. I tried to answer every email, return every phone call, and welcome impromptu visitors to my office. Visiting schools, attending as many community events as possible, and representing our city at many regional meetings were other ways to open up Edmonds government. I believe I succeeded in that quest, and if I have to leave anything as a legacy, that would be it.

The staff of the City—your staff—is an invaluable resource. They are trained experts in their line of work and dedicated to the city. We are in the service business, and that business serves you as a consumer of city services. We are a "people" business; people serving you. If we cut back on people, we cut back on services to you. In these difficult days of economic turmoil, tough choices have to be made, and this group of employees has done their share. They come to work every day to serve you and are proud to do so.

I can't find words to thank everyone who has supported me through thick and thin during the past 11 years. Citizens, my staff, my executive assistant Linda Carl, but most of all my family who have lived and breathed the ups and downs of a small-town mayor. And most of all, thanks to my wife Dolly who begrudgingly wore the title of First Lady of Edmonds. She put up with all the night and weekend events and meetings. She listened to the naysayers at every Council meeting and was understanding when I came home from a Council meeting at 11 p.m. and didn't really want to talk about what had transpired that night. She has earned sainthood and then some!

I have many fond memories of the past 11 years serving as mayor. There were some not-so-fond ones as well, but isn't that the way life is? Some years were non-eventful and some, like 2001, included a large earthquake and September 11th. There were tax-limiting citizen initiatives and economic ups and downs (mostly downs), but we survived as a city.

I will always value Memorial Day at the cemetery, my visits to schools, sandcastle judging, the Easter egg hunt, and so many activities that I had the opportunity to take part in. Edmonds is an amazing place to live, and I'm happy to call it "home."

Fifteen years went by in the blink of an eye. Over 700 City Council meetings went by a little slower! As I said at my last Council meeting, it has been a great ride, a ride that only a few get to experience and one that I will never regret.

Thank you for your support and encouragement. It has been my honor and privilege to serve you.